

## **Section 2: Bonneville County, Idaho**

### **Profile of Bonneville County**

Bonneville County, located in Southeastern Idaho, is part of the Upper Snake River Valley. Its eastern border is also the state border of Idaho and Wyoming. Bonneville County is the fourth-largest county in the state and covers 1,822 square miles. Topography varies from broken lava beds and sagebrush-covered desert on the west to agricultural lands and forest in the central and eastern areas of the county. Elevations range from 4,625 to 10,025 feet above sea level. The present population is over 82,522 with most of the people living in and around the Idaho Falls area.

Bonneville County has four fire districts/departments within its boundaries. These include the Ammon Fire Department, Swan Valley Fire District, Idaho Falls Fire Department/Bonneville District #1, and Ucon Fire Department. (See Appendix 3 for a complete profile of each fire district.) Additionally, three other fire districts/departments, which are located in neighboring counties, provide services within Bonneville County: Central Fire District, Alpine Fire District, and Caribou County Fire Department. Caribou County Fire Department is in the process of establishing a formal memorandum of understanding to provide services in Bonneville County. All fire department/district boundaries are represented on maps in Appendix 6.

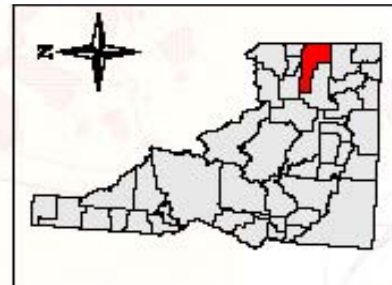
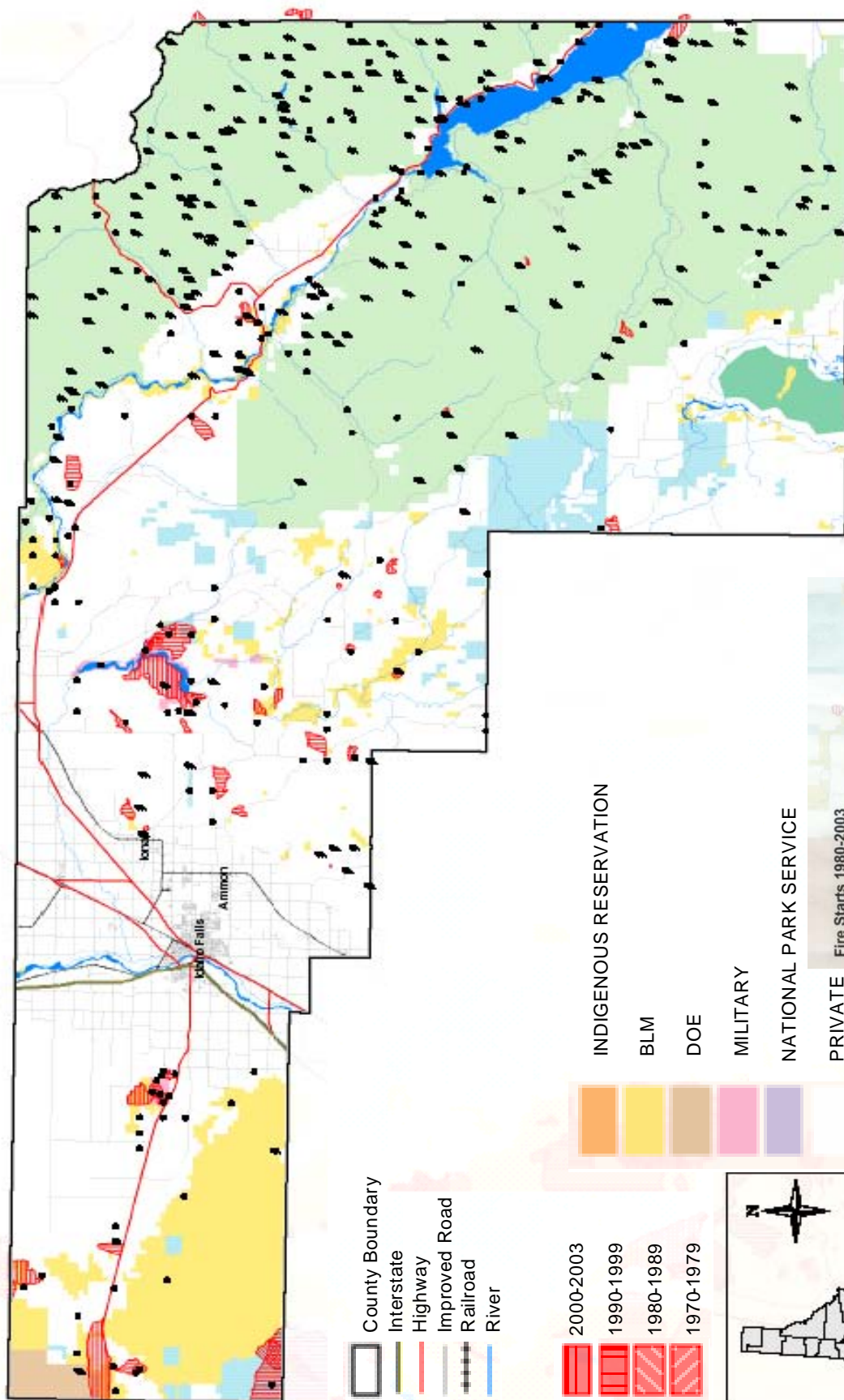
There are approximately 623,145 acres of Federal and 53,694 acres of State land within the boundaries of Bonneville County. Fire protection for Federal and State Lands is the responsibility of the Targhee – Caribou National Forest and the Upper Snake River District of the Bureau of Land Management. For more information regarding fire protection on federal lands see the Targhee-Caribou Fire Plan and the Upper Snake River District Fire Operations Plan.

### **Fire History:**

According to the BLM and the Forest Service, between 1980 and 2003 there were 418 fire starts resulting in roughly 38,000 acres of land burned by wildfires in Bonneville County, however; the actual number may be far greater. These fires are indicated on a map on the following page. A large portion of Bonneville County has no fire protection, so wildfires in these areas are not reported by the BLM, the Forest Service, or the local fire districts. According to the BLM there have been several wildfires, particularly on the eastern foothills, that have been reported to the BLM dispatch that have not been responded to. These fires are typically on privately held lands and are responded to by the private property owners until they threaten structures within fire districts or federal lands.

Of the reported 418 fire starts, 231 were naturally started, usually through lightning strikes, and 187 were human-caused. The naturally started wildfires are typically located in the heavily forested lands in the Palisades area while the human-caused fires are in the high desert areas of the county. There were two significant fires in the Ririe Reservoir area, one in 1983 that was lightning caused and one in 2000 that was human caused. The BLM reports that they annually have a human caused wildfire in the area of the gun range, located off of Highway 20 on the west end of the county. A map of fires over 500 acres, which includes all federally reported fires, is located in Appendix 6. There have been no fires over 500 acres within the Swan Valley Fire District within the last 20 years. Additionally, Bonneville Fire District reports there were no fires over 500 acres within the district for the last 20 years.

# Bonneville County Wildfire Mitigation Fire History Map



**Fire Starts 1980-2003**

Cause	Total		BLM		USFS		Total	
	#	Acres	#	Acres	#	Acres	#	Acres
Natural	28	1582.6	203	14744.7	231	16327.3		
Human	110	21180.3	77	568.4	187	21748.7		
<b>Total</b>	<b>138</b>	<b>22762.9</b>	<b>280</b>	<b>15313.1</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>38076.0</b>		

**IA Ownership**

Ownership	#	Acres
BLM	28	1582.6
USFS	203	14744.7
<b>Total</b>	<b>231</b>	<b>16327.3</b>



This map was created by the Bonneville County Office of Planning and Development for the purpose of wildfire mitigation planning. It is not intended to be used for any other purpose. The map is a draft and subject to change without notice.

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DATE: 4/20/2004

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**Transportation Routes:**

Bonneville County is intersected by Interstate 15, which runs north and south. Highway 20/26 traverses the county east and west with Highway 20 turning northward towards Rigby at the intersection of the Lewisville Highway. Highway 26 continues eastward to the Wyoming state line. Highway 31 intersects with Highway 26 in Swan Valley and proceeds north to Victor, Idaho over the Pine Creek Pass.

From a wildland/urban interface perspective, Highway 20 from Idaho Falls to the INEEL and Highway 26 from Idaho Falls to the Wyoming border are both vulnerable to wildfire. Highway 20 across the INEEL has been closed on several occasions due to wildfires and resulting blowing dust from previous wildfires. Highway 26 from the Swan Valley Bridge to the Wyoming border could potentially be closed due to wildfires.

**Recreation Sites:**

There are multiple recreation sites in the wildland/urban interface areas of Bonneville County. The most significant and high use sites are in the Ririe Reservoir, Swan Valley, and Palisades areas. Campgrounds, Recreational Vehicle (RV) parks, and boat launches are found at either end of the Ririe Reservoir and along the Snake River and Palisades Reservoir. Additionally, there are campgrounds and outfitter base camps in Caribou Basin and Jack Knife.

**Summer Home Subdivisions:**

A number of summer home subdivisions are located in the wildland/urban interface in the Swan Valley Fire District. Additional subdivisions are found along Highway 26 between the Palisades Dam and Wyoming in non-protected areas of Bonneville County. These subdivisions are typically within the defined wildland/urban interface areas.

**Conservation Reserve Program Lands**

The Conservation Reserve Program encourages farmers to convert highly erodible cropland or other environmentally sensitive acreage to vegetative cover, such as domestic or native grasses, wildlife plantings, trees, filterstrips, or riparian buffers. Farmers receive an annual rental payment for the term of the multi-year contract. Cost sharing is provided to establish the vegetative cover practices.

**Palisades Dam/Electrical Power Generation:**

Located on the Snake River about 55 miles southeast of Idaho Falls, Idaho, the Palisades Dam, operated by the Bureau of Reclamation, is a large zoned earth filled structure 270 feet high. The dam has a crest length of 2,100 feet, and contains 13,571,000 cubic yards of material. It creates a reservoir of 1,401,000 acre-feet capacity (active 1,200,000 acre-feet). Electrical power transmission lines leaving the Palisades Power Plant cross national forest and private lands within the wildland/urban interface areas. The electrical power generated at the Palisades Dam is a significant portion of the electrical power distributed in the northwest United States.